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ABSTRACT

To aid parents in selecting appropriate child care, this guide describes the kinds of public and private day care, prekindergarten, and kindergarten programs that are available in most communities in New York. After listing facts parents should consider concerning their own and their child's needs, the guide offers directions for finding locally available community resources and provides a checklist for assessing child care programs. Subsequent material very briefly describes, in terms of level of cost, ages served, and program characteristics, the various types of educational opportunities that are open to young children, including parent cooperative nursery schools, privately sponsored centers, nonpublic nursery schools, preschool programs within a nonpublic school, New York State prekindergarten programs and other preschool programs in public schools, college sponsored centers, and Head Start. Various kinds of child care programs are also summarized, including home-based or family day care, group day care, center-based full day child care, before and after school programs, and in-home care. Concluding material profiles additional options: mothers' centers, Mommy and Me Programs, playgroups, preventive programs within guidance centers, library progams, and the New York City Mayor's Office of Early Childhood Education's Project Giant Step, a comprehensive program with specific guidelines. (RH)

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A Parents Guide to **EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION PROGRAMS** in New York State

The University of The State of New York
The State Education Department
Albany, New York 12234

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Message from The Commissioner

Making sure that your young child is enrolled in an appropriate day care or prekindergarten program is a major decision for you. To help you sift through the wide variety of programs available in New York State, the State Education Department has prepared the following guide which describes both public and private day-care, prekindergarten, and kindergarten programs that are available in most communities.

Those of us who live in the Empire State are fortunate because New York is in the national forefront of providing parents with an array of options in selecting quality child care programs. I know that you, as parents, are interested in exploring all possibilities for your young child.

Perhaps you have recently joined the work force or are in job training or enrolled in school. Or perhaps you feel your child needs the socialization and stimulation that a nursery school, prekindergarten or other child care program can provide. Whatever the reason, a variety of quality programs and resources exist in New York State. To help you discover what is available in your area and which is best for your child, read the following booklet. It provides specific information on what to look for.

Thomas Sobol

Thomas Sobol

Commissioner of Education

Facts You Should Consider

What are your needs?

- Hours?
- Location?
- Transportation?
- Personal preferences?
- Costs?

What are your child's needs?

- Kind of environment?
- Group size?
- Program?

How to Find the Resources Available in Your Community

- Inquire at your local school district; religious institutions; public library; Chamber of Commerce.
- Look for newspaper ads.
- Check with local realtors.
- Consult the classified telephone directory (under schools, child care, nursery schools).
- Contact:
  - Regional Resource and Referral Systems
  - Local chapters of the Association for the Education of Young Children
  - Your local Day Care Council
  - New York State Department of Social Services Regional Office
  - Cooperative Extension offices
  - Clinics, hospitals
  - Your pediatrician
  - Your neighbors

What Should You Look For?

No matter what program you choose, it is important that you and your child visit the facility for at least part of a day so that you can observe the classroom, watch the children at play with one another, and sense the interactions between adults and children.

Feel free to look, listen and ask questions. The day will probably include large blocks of time for free choice activities such as painting, building, role playing, working with puzzles and other manipulative materials, experimenting with water, singing and listening to stories. There should also be time for running, climbing, and riding bikes either indoors or outside, as well as getting together for a group meal or snack. Good classrooms look very much alike, no matter where they're located, what their source of funds, or philosophical base.

Check List

- Is the center in compliance with necessary state guidelines, as well as local health and safety requirements?
- Does the physical space allow for a variety of activities, indoor and outdoors?
- Is the physical environment comfortable, safe, and stimulating?
- Does the schedule include a balance between activities that are small group and large group, active and quiet, mental and physical, talking and listening, indoor and outdoor?
- Does the staff relate to the children with warmth and caring, respect and trust? Is there adequate supervision throughout the day for the number of children involved?
- Is there a variety of stimulating and colorful equipment and materials?
- Are parents welcomed as frequent visitors and is information about their child shared regularly?

Types of Programs Available

KEY TO SYMBOLS		
NP = Not-for-Profit	0 = Free	$$ = Moderate fee
P = Profit	$ = Low fee	$$$ = Expensive

New York State provides a range of educational opportunities for young children. They include:

Parent cooperative nursery schools

Operated and sponsored by a parent group with parents expected to regularly assist in the classrooms on a rotating basis to offset costs. Scholarships sometimes available.

2-1/2 – 3 hours, morning or afternoon, two to five days per week; mid-September through mid-June; sometimes summer

NP.....$-$$.....2-5 year olds

Privately sponsored centers

COMMUNITY NURSERY SCHOOLS – Operated and sponsored by: YM/YWCA's, YM/YWHA's, religious institutions, industry, libraries, hospitals, and community based organizations. Receive income primarily through fees and tuition payments by parents, often on a sliding scale based on family's ability to pay. Scholarships sometimes available.

2-1/2 – 3 hours, morning or afternoon, two to five days per week or may provide full day child care; school year

NP.....$-$$.....2-5 year olds

NONPUBLIC NURSERY SCHOOLS — Operated by private providers, may be registered by the State Education Department. Parents pay fees. Scholarships sometimes available.

2-1/2 — 3 hours, morning or afternoon, two to five days a week; school year, sometimes summer

P.....$-$$.....2-5 year olds

PRESCHOOL PROGRAMS WITHIN A NONPUBLIC SCHOOL — Operated within some private schools. Scholarships sometimes available.

2-1/2 hours, morning or afternoon, two to five days per week

P.....$$$.....3-5 year olds

Programs in Public Schools

NEW YORK STATE PREKINDERGARTEN PROGRAMS – Operated and sponsored by public school districts and State Education Department, with comprehensive programmatic guidelines. Ninety percent of the children enrolled must be from families which are economically disadvantaged.

2-1/2 – 3 hours, morning or afternoon, four to five days a week; School year

NP.....O for eligible families.....4 year olds

OTHER PRESCHOOL PROGRAMS IN PUBLIC SCHOOLS – Operated and sponsored by local school districts within their schools with a variety of programmatic guidelines, staffing, and funding sources.

2-1/2 – 3 hours, morning or afternoon, two to five days a week

NP.....O for eligible families.....4-year-olds

College Sponsored Centers

Operated by a college and generally located on or near the campus for children of faculty, campus employees, and students. They often include research and teacher training activities.

Full day, 2-1/2 – 3 hours or "drop-in," variety of days, sliding fee scale

NP.....$-$$.....2-5-year olds (sometimes infants)

Head Start

Comprehensive program operated by U. S. Department of Health and Human Services for low-income families. May be located in a school or in sites easily accessible to those being served.

2-1/2 – 3 hours, morning or afternoon, five days a week, sometimes full day

NP.....O for eligible families.....3 or 4-year olds

Child Care Programs

There are several kinds of day care programs that care for children for extended periods of the day and which accommodate a range of ages from infants and toddlers to school-age children. Eligibility and availability of services will vary from one county to another. Most child care programs are not-for-profit.

- Home based or family day care: Three children are cared for by a caregiver in the caregiver's home (State licensed or county certified).

  All day, all year.
  Fees: Sliding scale, Department of Social Services funding for those eligible in county certified homes.

- Group day care: One caregiver and at least one adult assistant for six to 12 children in home of the caregiver (licensed/certified).

  All day, all year.
  Fees: Sliding scale, Department of Social Services funded for eligible families.

- Center-based full day child care: Seven or more children in a pre-school facility involving a teaching staff and classrooms (must meet New York State Department of Social Services licensing requirements).

  All day, all year (to accommodate parents' working hours); infancy through five years, sometimes combining ages.

- Before and after school programs: Child care for school-age children from ages 5-14 in a variety of settings, such as elementary schools, community centers or existing day care centers. Programs are required to have a permit if they operate for more than 15 hours per week or if they use public funds from the Department of Social Services.

  Daytime hours when school is not in session.
  Fees: Sliding scale, sometimes funded by Department of Social Services.

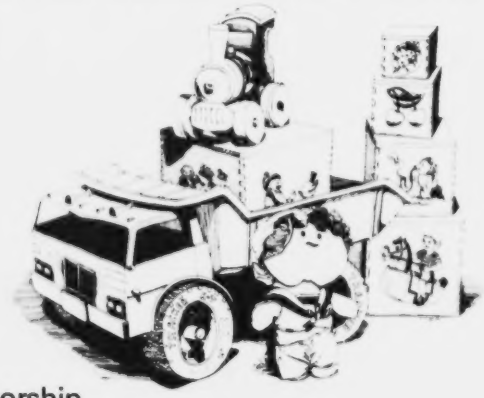
- In-home care: A caregiver who is hired to come to the child's home to provide care, or a relative who provides care.

  All day, all year. O.....$$$

Additional options

A few additional options exist which consist of one or two sessions a week and primarily serve to give parents of young children an opportunity to talk and socialize. Some of these are:

- MOTHERS' CENTERS — Guided discussion groups work toward developing leadership within the group; babysitting provided.
- MOMMY AND ME PROGRAMS — Sponsored by YMCA, YMHA or churches, these groups provide rap sessions and babysitting. May also include swim or exercise type programs.
- PLAYGROUPS — Groups of neighbors and friends make arrangements to care for each other's children in a small group, thus providing respite from parenting responsibilities.
- PREVENTIVE PROGRAMS WITHIN GUIDANCE CENTERS — Primarily parent education sessions; babysitting provided.
- LIBRARIES — Story hours for toddlers, pre-school children, and parents.



Combined Sponsorship

Project Giant Step, coordinated by the New York City Mayor's Office of Early Childhood Education and co-administered by the New York City Board of Education and the Agency for Child Development, is a comprehensive program with specific guidelines.

3 hours, morning or afternoon, 5 days a week during the school year in the boroughs of New York City.

NP.....O.....all 4-year-olds